

MAINE PUBLIC HEALTH ALERT NETWORK SYSTEM



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****ADVISORY – Important Information****

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TO: All HAN Recipients
FROM: Dora Anne Mills, M.D., M.P.H., Public Health Director
SUBJECT: Influenza Arrives in Maine
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Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention (Maine CDC)
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Influenza arrives in Maine

Influenza has officially arrived in Maine. The first laboratory confirmed cases of influenza were reported this week. A young adult from Androscoggin County tested positive for influenza A (H1). This young adult was unimmunized and has no record of recent travel. A youth from Cumberland County also tested positive for influenza A (H1). No medical history was available for this patient.

Now that we know influenza is officially in Maine, it is important that we make every effort to try to limit its spread. The best way to prevent getting influenza is getting vaccinated. Influenza vaccine has been widely distributed in Maine and appears to be still available in most places. New recommendations advise all children aged 6 months to 18 years be immunized this influenza season. All high risk individuals should be vaccinated as soon as possible.

Also as we enter the influenza season, it is important to remember the basics guidelines of preventing illness including: covering coughs and sneezes; washing hands frequently; and staying home if you feel ill.

Clinicians should consider influenza in the differential diagnosis of febrile respiratory illnesses in patients of any age, encourage their high risk patients to be immunized against influenza if they have not already done so, and review updated recommendations of the use of antiviral medications for influenza prophylaxis and treatment.

- Vaccine should still be available and high risk patients as well as children should be vaccinated as soon as possible. The Maine Immunization Program has distributed all its vaccine for this season. Check with local providers in your community for availability.
- The ACIP has recommended that neither amantadine nor rimantidine be used for treatment/prophylaxis of influenza A or B this season. Detailed recommendations on use of oseltamivir (Tamiflu) and zanamivir (Relenza) for both treatment and prophylaxis of influenza A and influenza B are available through the link below.
- Influenza outbreaks are reportable to the state of Maine. Please report all suspected outbreaks in long term care facilities, acute care facilities, and schools to 1-800-821-5821.
- When influenza is first detected in a community by use of rapid diagnostic testing, consider sending some specimens to the Maine CDC's Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory for confirmation (for more information contact Sara Robinson at 1-800-821-5821).

Preliminary information from the federal CDC has indicated that this season's H1N1 isolates may be resistant to oseltamivir (Tamiflu). However, at present national recommendations for use of antivirals for prophylaxis and treatment of influenza have not changed. Oseltamivir and zanamivir are the two drugs currently recommended. Providers will be notified through the health alert network if national recommendations are revised.

For up-to-date information/recommendation on influenza for health professionals, go to <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/professionals>

For surveillance information in Maine, go to <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/boh/Influenza.htm>